

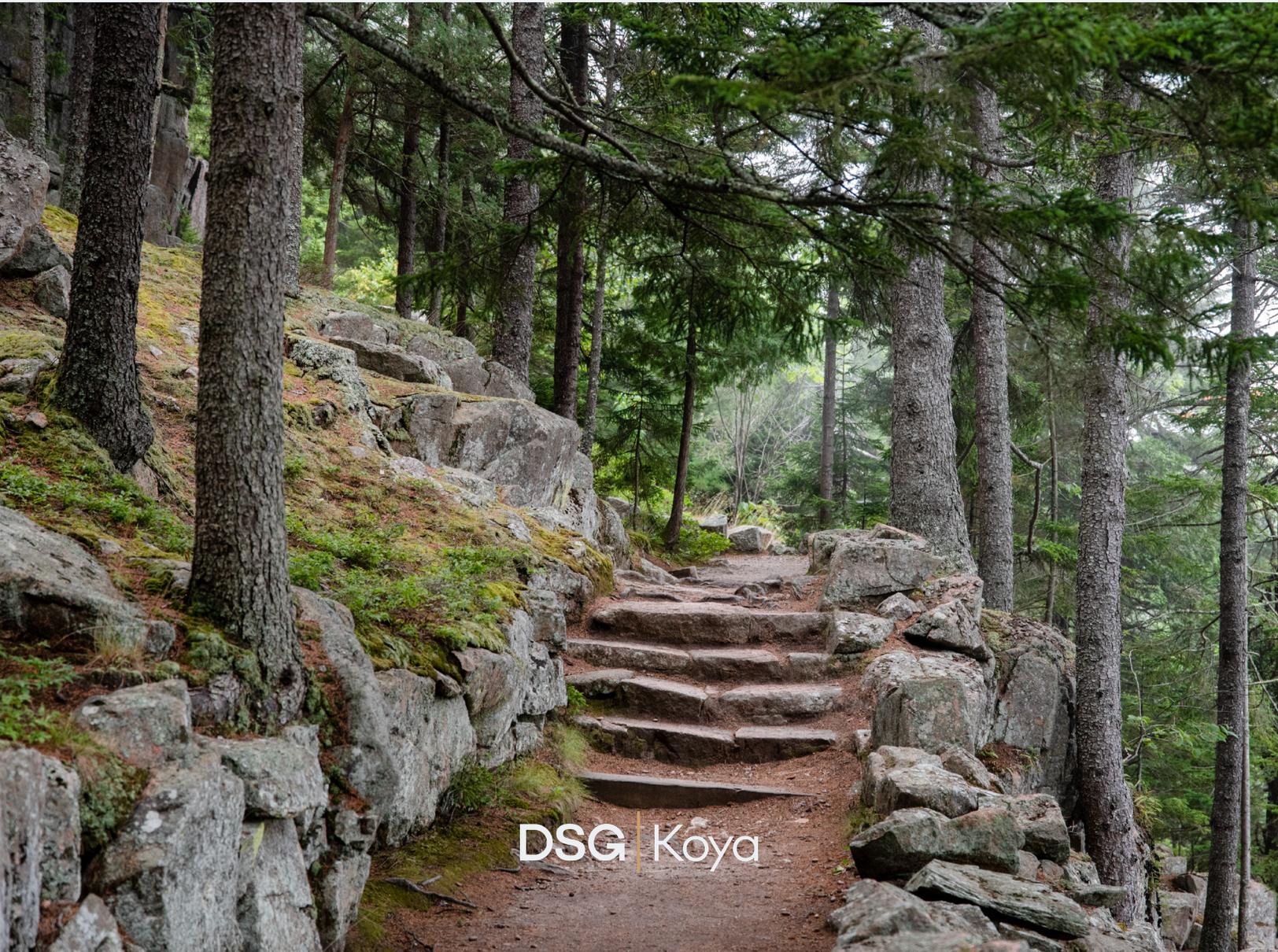
LAND AND GARDEN PRESERVE

Position Profile

Chief Operating Officer

Mount Desert Land & Garden Preserve

Mount Desert Island, Maine



DSG | Koya

About Mount Desert Land & Garden Preserve

Mount Desert Land & Garden Preserve has a history shaped over more than a century by insightful and public-spirited people who cherished the landscape design and natural beauty of Mount Desert Island.

The nonprofit Land & Garden Preserve offers serenity across 1,400 acres of astonishingly beautiful natural lands, trails, carriage roads, and three breathtaking historic pleasure gardens adjacent to Acadia National Park on Mount Desert Island, Maine, between Seal Harbor and Northeast Harbor. Visitors enjoy our lands by walking a vast network of trails and carriage roads. We steward three top-tier public gardens of wildly different character: The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Garden, Thuya Garden, and the Asticou Azalea Garden. Each is a horticultural work of art that reinforces a strong sense of place and contributes to the special wonder of coastal Maine. Our people are among our greatest assets. We proudly employ a dedicated team of talented gardeners and craftspeople with a passion for our mission to conserve and share the beauty of our historic lands and gardens.

The Preserve exists for those who want to connect with nature, to be inspired and restored, and to contribute to the conservation and sustainability of some of the most beautiful, historic public lands and gardens in New England. Through stewardship, openness, and tremendous care, the Preserve nurtures the essential interconnections between humanity and nature.





The Preserve was born from a deep love for the land and a desire to share it with others. We welcome members and visitors of all ages who seek to experience breathtaking natural beauty and who share a strong commitment to the environment, just like the people who work here. The Preserve and its people are rooted in a deep culture of respect – for humankind and its connection to nature, for stewardship and environmental integrity, for history and legacy, and for the artful power of fine horticulture.

The Preserve represents several dualities: its historic gardens are a step back in time, yet it maintains a keen focus on botanical innovation, horticultural excellence, ecological health, and best practices in environmental sustainability. We balance faithful historic preservation with forward-thinking approaches, and careful stewardship with public openness. The Preserve offers an invitation to wonder, think, learn, and discover. There is magic here. There is history, and there is joy, all ready to be experienced and interpreted anew with each visit.

For more information about
the Preserve, please visit
www.gardenpreserve.org

Mount Desert Island

Mount Desert Island (MDI) in Maine is a stunning and iconic location, known for its rugged beauty, picturesque towns, and rich natural and cultural history. Located in the Downeast region of coastal Maine, MDI is the second largest island on the Eastern Seaboard, and home to the famous Acadia National Park, one of the most visited national parks in the United States.

The island has a rich tradition as a summer encampment dating back over 6000 years, when the indigenous Wabanaki lived off the land by hunting, fishing, and foraging, then retreating to inland Maine during the winter months. MDI's reputation as a peak summer destination was solidified in the mid-19th century. Drawn by the island's spectacular natural beauty, academics, theologians, and artists formed spirited intellectual communities on MDI. Prominent families including the Rockefellers, Morgans, Fords, Carnegies, Vanderbilts, and Astors built summer "cottages" on the island, isolated from the frenetic pace of industrial America. The island continues to attract residents and visitors with interesting and diverse backgrounds who seek a unique lifestyle in a remarkable setting.

To this day, MDI experiences distinct population "ebbs and flows" throughout the year, with the peak season being summer, particularly from late June through September. During this time, the island becomes a bustling hub for the 4 million tourists and summer residents who come to experience the beauty of Acadia, explore charming towns including Bar Harbor, Northeast Harbor, and Southwest Harbor, and partake in outdoor activities like hiking, kayaking, and biking the extensive network of non-motorized carriage roads.



Winter brings a sharp contrast as the island empties of tourists and summer residents, leaving behind a small but robust year-round community. Many businesses close for the winter months, and the island enters a period of hibernation. With temperatures often below freezing and snow blanketing the landscape, it can feel like a magically different world. While the island is quieter during winter, the snow-capped mountains and serene surroundings provide a spectacular winter landscape, perfect for those who appreciate the solitude and beauty of Maine in its coldest months.

MDI is a place of incredible beauty and contrasts. The fluctuations of tourism define its rhythm, with a bustling summer tourist season, quiet spring and fall months, and a peaceful, often snowy winter. Residents take advantage of the largely empty National Park as their personal backyard during the months when the island is quiet.

The culture of the Land & Garden Preserve reflects the cadence of island life. The gardens are open only in the summer, but the organization operates year-round. The summer brings an influx of seasonal gardeners, garden greeters, and trail stewards, while amongst the year-round staff, the winter is a time for reflection, planning, and preparation for the next busy season to come.



The Opportunity

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is a new critical leadership role responsible for ensuring the efficient and effective operations of the organization. Reporting directly to the CEO, the COO will be a key strategic partner, overseeing daily operations, cross-departmental collaboration, and long-term planning and project delivery to support the organization's mission.

This role offers an opportunity to drive operational excellence, enhance organizational efficiency, and implement strategic initiatives that will have a lasting impact. The COO will oversee capital project planning and execution, human resources, IT, and risk management, ensuring smooth internal operations while supporting a high-quality experience for staff and visitors.

As the organization continues to grow and evolve, the COO will play a vital role in developing sustainable staffing models, overseeing infrastructure projects, and ensuring alignment with strategic plans. This is an exciting opportunity for a mission-driven leader who thrives in a dynamic, multifaceted environment and is passionate about operational effectiveness, organizational growth, and impact.



Candidate Profile

The following competencies are crucial for success in the Chief Operating Officer role:

Strategic Leadership

- Develop and communicate long-term strategies that align with the organization's goals.
- Lead the development and implementation of sustainability initiatives, focusing on climate readiness, conservation efforts, and accessibility.
- Ensure compliance with conservation easements and regulations, while monitoring progress toward the achievement of strategic and framework plans.
- Partner with CEO to drive organizational planning efforts, including comprehensive campus planning, strategic vision, and the development of cultural landscape reports, ensuring alignment with long-term organizational goals.

Organizational Leadership

- Serve as a key leadership partner to the CEO in balancing efficient daily operations with long-term strategic initiatives.
- Oversee cross-departmental projects, ensuring timely delivery, efficient execution, and alignment with organizational goals.
- Coordinate with department directors to drive operational efficiency and resolve potential challenges.
- Delegate project leadership, monitor progress, and identify opportunities to optimize workflows and adapt to changing circumstances.
- Implement policies and procedures that ensure an exceptional guest experience, including customer service, registration processes, and crowd management.

Operations and Management

- Partner with the CFO to ensure adherence to approved budgets and financial constraints.
- Review contracts in collaboration with the CEO and CFO, ensuring alignment with organizational financial goals and legal requirements.
- Lead long-term capital planning efforts, working closely with the CEO and CFO on budget projections and multi-year plans.
- Oversee human resources, IT, risk management, and capital projects, ensuring smooth operations management and inspiring cross-functional work, ensuring collaboration and high performance.

Project Leadership

- Work with department heads to ensure that all operational functions, including staffing and facilities, meet the demands of seasonal changes.
- Supervise the procurement and acquisition of houses, ensuring alignment with project timelines and efficient vendor management for all related construction and development activities.
- Oversee the equitable utilization of staff housing and coordinate workspace adjustments to optimize organizational operations.
- Oversee and manage capital projects, ensuring timely execution and adherence to budget, managing RFP processes, contractors, and coordinating with vendors and owner's representatives to maintain project schedules and milestones.

Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in business administration, nonprofit management, operations, or a related field; advanced degree preferred.
- 10+ years of progressive leadership experience in operations, administration, or a related field, ideally within a nonprofit, public garden, land conservation, or mission-driven organization.
- Proven experience as a key leadership partner to an Executive Director or CEO.
- Experience overseeing HR functions, IT, and risk management.
- Familiarity with financial oversight, budget management, and multi-year operational planning in partnership with a CFO.
- Strong ability to balance centralization and decentralization—ensuring efficiency while maintaining high-quality outcomes aligned with organizational values and culture.
- Demonstrated success in managing and mentoring teams, fostering collaboration, and developing sustainable long-term staffing models.
- Experience coordinating across departments to improve workflows, resolve capacity challenges, and implement strategic initiatives.
- Ability to lead large-scale operational projects, including staff workspace planning and equitable allocation of resources such as housing.
- Effective delegation and oversight of cross-departmental initiatives, ensuring timely execution and problem resolution.
- Experience leading or supporting capital projects, including managing RFP processes, evaluating and selecting contractors, and working with an owner's representative.
- Ability to oversee legal and risk management functions, including insurance oversight and contract review in partnership with the CFO and CEO.
- Strong project management skills, with the ability to set priorities, monitor progress, and adapt to changing circumstances.
- Familiarity with conservation easements, strategic planning, and framework plan implementation.
- Understanding of climate readiness initiatives and accessibility planning.
- Exceptional organizational and problem-solving abilities, with a strategic mindset and a proactive approach to challenges.
- Strong relationship-building skills, with the ability to collaborate effectively with internal teams and external partners.
- Clear and professional communication skills, both written and verbal.
- Ability to foster a culture of inclusivity, service excellence, and mission alignment across the organization.

Compensation & Benefits

Mount Desert Land & Garden Preserve offers a competitive salary commensurate with experience and an excellent benefits package. The anticipated salary range for this position is \$145,000 - \$155,000.

Mount Desert Land & Garden Preserve is an equal opportunity employer and encourages applicants from diverse backgrounds to apply.

Contact

Liz Lombard and Angie Sessoms of Koya Partners have been exclusively retained for this search. To express your interest in this role please submit your materials via the [Talent Profile](#) or to Angie directly at asesoms@koyapartners.com. All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential.

Koya Partners is committed to providing reasonable accommodation to individuals living with disabilities. If you are a qualified individual living with a disability and need assistance expressing interest online, please email NonprofitSearchOps@divsearch.com. If you are selected for an interview, you will receive additional information regarding how to request an accommodation for the interview process.

About DSG | Koya

DSG | Koya, a DSG Global company, is the nation's premier search firm dedicated to mission-driven leadership. Since its founding in 2004, DSG | Koya has had an exclusive focus on mission-driven clients and was founded on the belief that the right leader can transform an organization and have a deep and measurable impact on our world. DSG | Koya works with nonprofits & NGOs, responsible businesses, and social enterprises in local communities and around the world.

DSG Global is consistently recognized by Forbes on its top 10 list of "America's Best Executive Recruiting Firms" and is an industry leader in recruiting transformational leaders for a changing world. The firm is deliberately different in its approach, with best-in-class teams who have decades of experience in cultivating inclusive leaders, understanding the dimensions of diversity, and building equitable teams.

Learn more about DSG | Koya via the [firm's website](#).